

Writing and Placing an Op-Ed

Newspapers generally publish a page of opinion columns and letters opposite the editorial page; hence the term opposite editorial, or “op-ed.” The op-ed pages are the arena in which ideas and issues are debated, a good place to raise awareness of an issue. During **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** you have an excellent opportunity to address important issues related to substance abuse treatment programs. Writing an op-ed places you in the role of a columnist expressing your views while presenting the facts.

Whether you use the sample provided or write your own, here are some tips for writing and placing an op-ed:

- Make an outline. It will help you stay focused and act as a reminder to cover key points.
- Stick with one subject per submission.
- Express an opinion and be clear and well-stated from the beginning.
- Do not assume your readers are aware of the issue or your viewpoint. Give them enough background information to help them follow your logic.
- Support your position with statistics or study results, but do not bury them in numbers.
- Use appropriate anecdotes; reference a recent news event or story.
- Contact one or more of the listed **Recovery Month** planning partners for a relevant quote.
- Localize your story whenever possible.
- Be clear and firm in your approach, but not fanatical.
- Keep your op-ed to 800 words or less. More is not better.

You can reach a publication with your op-ed three ways: phone, mail, or email. Whichever way you choose, get the process started about a month before the kickoff of **Recovery Month**. Begin by calling the paper to find out the name of the appropriate party to contact. At this point, you may learn that the policy of the paper is to send a written copy (or fax) of the op-ed to the editorial page editor. A letter that explains who you are and provides some background information about **Recovery Month** and the topic should accompany the op-ed. It should briefly but clearly state the issue and why your thoughts on the subject are important. Give your article a week or so to arrive and then call the publication to be sure the op-ed was received and to answer any questions.

Regardless of how you choose to approach a publication, be sure to include an “authorship line” at the end of the piece. This information should include your full name and a brief description of who you are and what you do that makes you an expert on the subject. It should also include your daytime telephone number.

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month* 2003 with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.

We would like to know about your efforts during *Recovery Month*. Please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in the kit. Directions are included on the form.

Please send any of your organization's *Recovery Month* promotional samples to:
Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA,
Rockwall Building II, 5600 Fisher Lane, Rockville, MD 20857. For any additional *Recovery Month* materials visit our web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> or call 1-800-729-6686.